

THE BEST FRIEND

NO. 2627

A SERMON

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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON

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Thine own friend, and thy father's friend, forsake not.

Proverbs 27:10

TRUE friends are very scarce. We have a great many acquaintances, and sometimes we call them friends, and so misuse the noble word "friendship." Peradventure, in some after day of adversity, when these so-called friends have looked out for their own interests and left us to do the best we can for ourselves, that word friendship may come back to us with sad and sorrowful associations.

The friend in need is a friend indeed, and such friends, I say again, are scarce. When you have found such a man and proved the sincerity of his friendship, when he has been faithful to your father and to you, grapple him to yourself with hooks of steel and never let him go.

It may be that because he is a faithful friend, he will sometimes vex you and anger you. See how Solomon puts it in this very chapter—"Open rebuke is better than secret love. Faithful are the wounds of a friend." It takes a great deal of friendship to be able to tell a man his faults. It is not friendship that flatters. It is small friendship that holds its tongue when it ought to speak.

But it is true friendship that can speak at the right time, and if need be, even speak so sharply as to cause a wound. If you are like many other foolish folk, you will be angry with the man who is so much your friend that he will tell you the truth. If you are unworthy of your friend, you will begin to grow weary of him when he is performing on your behalf the most heroic act of pure charity by warning you of your danger and reminding you of your imperfection.

Solomon, in prospect of such a case, knowing that this is one of the greatest trials of friendship among such poor imperfect beings as we are, tells us not to forsake, for this reason—nor indeed, for any other reason—the man who has been to us and to our family a true friend. "Thine own friend, and thy father's friend, forsake not."

I do not think that I would waste your time if I were to give you a lecture upon friendship—its duties, its dangers, its rights and its privileges—but it is not my intention to do so. There is one Friend to whom these words of Solomon are especially applicable, there is a Friend who is the chief and highest of all friends and when I speak of Him, I feel that I am not spiritualizing the text in the least. He is a true and real Friend, and these words are truly and really applicable to Him.

And if ever the text is emphatic, it is so when it is applied to Him, for there was never such another friend to us and to our fathers. There is no friend to whom we ought to be so intensely attached as to Him. "Your own friend, and thy father's friend, forsake not."

I want, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to speak upon this subject. First, here is *a descriptive title*, which may be fitly applied to Christ by many of us. He is our own Friend, and also our father's Friend. Secondly, here is *suggestive advice* concerning this Friend. "Forsake him not." And ere I have done, I shall say a little upon *a consequent resolution*. I hope that we shall turn the text into a solemn resolve and say, "My own Friend, and my father's Friend, I will not forsake."

I. First, then, here is A DESCRIPTIVE TITLE for our blessed Lord and Master.

First, he is a *Friend*, the Friend of man. I know that Young calls him the "great Philanthropist." I do not care to see that title used just so—it is not good enough for Him, though truly the great Lover of man

is Christ. Better still is the title which was given to Him when He was upon earth, “the friend of sinners.”—

“Friend of sinners is His name.”

Their Friend—thinking of them with love when no other eye pitied them and no other heart seemed to care for them. Their Friend—entering in tenderest sympathy into the case of the lost, for “the Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost.” Their Friend—giving them good and sound advice and wholesome counsel, for whosoever listens to the words of Christ shall find in His teaching and in His guidance the highest wisdom.

Their Friend, however, giving far more than sympathy and mere words—giving a lifetime of holy service for the sake of those whose cause He had espoused and going further even than this—doing for them the utmost that a friend can do, for what is there more than that a man should lay down his life for his friend?

Friend of man and therefore born of man. Friend of sinners and therefore living among them and ministering to them. Friend of sinners and therefore taking their sin upon Himself and bearing it “in his own body on the tree,” so fulfilling Gabriel’s prophecy that He would come “to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness.”

Christ has done for us all that needed to be done. He has done much more than we ever could have asked Him to do or expected Him to do. He has done more for us than we can understand even now that He has done it, and more than you and I are likely ever to understand even when our intellect shall have been developed and enlarged to the utmost degree before the eternal throne of God, for even there I do not think we shall ever fully know how much we owe to the friendship of our best Friend. However self-denying and tender other friends may be, our Lord must always stand at the head of the list, and we will not put a second there as worthy of any comparison with Him.

It is a very blessed thing, next, to have the Lord Jesus Christ as having been our *father’s Friend*. There are some of us to whom this has been literally true for many generations. I suppose that there is some pride in being the fourteenth earl, or the tenth duke, or having a certain rank among men. But sometimes, quietly to myself, I glory in my pedigree because I can trace the line of spiritual grace back as far as I can go to men who loved the Lord, and who, many of them, have preached His Word.

Many of you, I know, in this church, and in other churches, have a glorious heraldry in the line of the Lord’s nobles. It is true that some of you have had the great mercy of being taken, like trees out of the desert, and planted in the courts of our God, for which you may well be glad. But others of you are slips from vines that, in their turn, were slips from other vines loved and cared for by the great Husbandman.

You cannot tell how long this blessed succession has continued—thy fathers, and thy fathers’ fathers, as far back as you can trace them, were friends of Christ. Happy Ephraim, whose father Joseph had God with him! Happy Joseph, whose father Jacob saw God at Bethel! Happy Jacob, whose father Isaac walked in the fields and meditated in communion with JEHOVAH! Happy Isaac, whose father Abraham had spoken with God and was called “the friend of God.”

God has a habit of loving families. David said, “The mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children’s children; to such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them.” Grace does not run in the blood, but often the stream of divine mercy has run side by side with it, and instead of the fathers, have been the children, whom the Lord has made to be princes in the earth.

Some of you, perhaps, have fathers and mothers still living, whose example you may fitly follow. I charge you, never forsake your father’s God, or, what is tenderer still, the God of your mother. Others of you have parents in heaven. Well, they are still yours—that sacred relationship is not broken. You remember your mother’s last grasp of your hand when she bade you follow her to heaven. You recollect

your father's appeals to you, in his long sickness, when he pleaded with you to take heed to your ways and not neglect the things of God, but seek Him in the days of your youth.

Well, did you ever hear your father say anything against his God? Did your mother ever, in her confiding moments, whisper in your ear, "Mary, do not trust in God, for He has betrayed your mother's confidence"? No. I know they did not talk like that, for He was their best Friend. And He who was such a Friend to the dear old man whom you can never forget, He who cheered the heart of that gracious matron whose sweet face rises before you now—oh, I beseech you, forsake Him not! "Thine own friend, and thy father's friend, forsake not."

Still, the sweetest part of the text lies in these words, "*Thine own friend.*" I do not think that I can preach on those words. I can take them in my mouth and they are like honey for sweetness, but they must be personally enjoyed to be fully appreciated. There are some precious lines we sometimes sing,—

*"The health is of my countenance,
Yea, mine own God is He;—"*

which exactly describe the blessedness of "thine own friend."

Now, if it be true that Christ is your own Friend, then you have spoken with Him, you have held sweet converse with Him, you have placed your confidence in Him, you have told Him your lost estate and sinfulness, and you have reposed in Him as your own Savior. You have put your cause into His hands and you have left it there.

If He is indeed your own Friend, then He has helped you. You were a stranger and He has taken you in. You were naked and He has clothed you. You were spiritually sick and in prison, and He came to you and healed you. Yea, and He wore your chains and bade you go free. And He took your sicknesses and bade you take His health—and so He made you whole.

Ay, and He restored you even from the grave—and went into that grave Himself that by His death, you might live. You know that it is so and day by day you keep up communion with Him. You could not live without Him, for He is such a Friend to you, and you do rest on Him with all your weight as you come up from the wilderness with Him, leaning on your Beloved, "thine own friend."

Nor is the friendship all on one side, though your side is a very little one. You would make it greater if it were in your power, for you have confessed His name, you have united yourself with His people, you love to join with them in prayer and praise. You are not ashamed to be called by Christ's name as a Christian, or to speak well of that name, and you desire to consecrate to Him all that you have.

Better than all this, while you do call Him Friend, He also calls you friend, as He said to His disciples, "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you." Dare I say the words, yet, dare I doubt the truth of the words—Jesus is *my* Friend? There is one we read of in the Bible who was David's captain of the host, and there was another who was David's counselor. But there was one man whom we always call, "David's friend, Jonathan." And I envy him such a title. Yet Jesus gives this name to all those who come and put their trust in Him, and so find Him to be their Friend.

Now, inasmuch as the Lord Jesus is "thine own friend, and thy father's friend," the injunction of the text comes to you with peculiar force—"Forsake him not." Can you forsake Him? Look at His face, all red with bloody sweat for you. Nor His face alone, for He is covered all over with that gory robe wherein He wrought out your redemption.

He that works for bread must sweat, but He that worked for your eternal life did sweat great drops of blood falling down to the ground. Can you forsake Him? He stands at Pilate's bar, He is mocked by Herod's men of war. He is scourged by Pilate, and all for you—and can you forsake Him? He goes up to the cross of Calvary, and the cruel iron is driven through His hands and feet, and there He makes expiation for your guilt.

He is your Friend, even to the ignominy of a felon's death—and can you forsake Him? He lays His pierced hand on you and He says, "Wilt thou also go away?" Or as He worded it to the twelve, "Ye also

will not go away, will you?" So it might be read, "Many of my supposed friends have gone and so have proved themselves to be, not friends, but traitors. But you also will not go away, will you?" And He seems to make an appeal to them with those tearful, tender eyes of His—"as the eyes of doves by the rivers of waters, washed with milk, and fitly set"—"Ye also will not go away, will you?"

And when you turn your eye another way and think not merely of the shame your Friend endured for you, but recollect what is an equal proof of His love—that He is not ashamed of you now that He is in His glory. That amidst the throng of angels and cherubim and seraphim that frequent His courts above, He does not disdain to know that He is the brother of these poor earthworms down below, for even there He wears the body which proves Him to be our next of kin—ay, and wears the scars which proved that for us He endured the death penalty itself, and even now He is not ashamed to call us brethren.

As you think of all this, can you forsake Him? Because you are somewhat better off than you once were, will you leave the little gathering of poor folk with whom you used to worship so happily, and will you go to some more fashionable place where there is music, but little of the music of the name of Jesus—where there is gorgeous architecture, it may be, and masquerading, and mummery, and I know not what, but little of the sweet savor of His presence, and the dropping of that dew which He always brings with Him wherever He comes?

Oh, it is a pity, it is a sorrowful pity, it is a meanness that would disgrace a mere worldling—when a man who once confessed Christ and followed Him—must needs turn his back upon his Lord, because his own coat is made of better material than it used to be, and his balance at the bank is heavier! I had almost said—"Then let the Judas go, be his own place what it may—it were almost a dishonor to Christ to wish the traitor back.

Oh, will you go away, either from the Crucified or from the Glorified, for if you will forsake this Friend, "Behold, he cometh!" Every hour brings Him nearer. The chariots of His glory have glowing axles and you may almost hear them as they speed toward us. And then what will you do when you have forsaken your own Friend and your father's Friend, and you hear Him say, "I never knew you; I never knew you"? God grant that it may never be the lot of any of us here present to hear those awful words!

II. Now I pass on to our second head, as the Holy Spirit may help me. It is, SUGGESTIVE ADVICE—"Thine own friend, and thy father's friend, forsake not."

There is, to me, in the text, a suggestion which the text itself does not suggest. That is to say, *it suggests something by not suggesting it*. The text does not suggest to me that my own Friend and my father's Friend will ever forsake me. It seems to hint that I may forsake Him, but it does not suggest that He will ever forsake me—and He never will do so.

If the Lord had ever meant to forsake me, He has had so many good reasons for doing it, that He would have done it long ago. The apostle says of those who are journeying to the better country that, "if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned."

And certainly, our blessed Lord and Master, if He had desired to leave us to perish, had many an opportunity to return to heaven before He died. And since then, He has had many more occasions when He might have said, "I really must withdraw My friendship from you," if He had ever wished to do so. But His love is constant—"Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end."

His is a friendship which never changes. You shall never fall back on Him and find that He has withdrawn the arms with which He formerly upheld you. You shall find, in life and in death, that "there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother." Let us be cheered by the assurance that He will never forsake us.

Now let us go on to what the text does suggest in so many words. It suggests to us the question, *In what sense can we forsake Christ?* Well, there is more than one sense in which a man may forsake Christ. Two passages rise to my mind at this moment. "Then all the disciples forsook him, and fled." That was one sort of forsaking—they were all afraid and ran away from their Lord in the hour of His betrayal into the hands of sinners.

But it is quite another kind of forsaking when we read, “From that time many of his disciples went back and walked no more with him.” The first forsaking was the result of a sudden fear, much to be deplored and very blameworthy, but still only temporary in its effects. The other was the deliberate act of those who, in cold blood, refused to accept Jesus Christ’s doctrine, or to follow Him any farther, and so turned back, and walked no more with Him. This last forsaking is incurable. The former one was cured almost as soon as the sudden fear that caused it was removed, for we find John and even Peter following the Master to the judgment hall, and the whole of the disciples soon gathered around Him after His resurrection.

I would say to you, dear friend, “Thine own friend, and thy father’s friend, forsake not” in any sense at all. Forsake Him not even in your moments of alarm. Pray God that then you may play the man, and not forsake Him and flee. And then, in the other sense, let no quarrel ever arise between you and Christ’s most precious truth so as to lead you deliberately to leave Him, for this is the worst of all kinds of forsaking.

If we never forsake Him in any sense at all, then it is quite certain that we shall never forsake Him in the worst sense. I remember a little merriment I had with a good Wesleyan brother, the clerk of the works, when the Tabernacle was being built. He wanted me to go up a ladder right into those lantern lights and I said, “No, thank you. I would rather not.”

“But” he replied, “I thought you had no fear of falling.” “Yes,” I answered, “that is quite true. I have no fear of finally falling away, but the belief that the Lord will preserve me does not exercise any evil influence over me, for it keeps me from running unnecessary risks by climbing up ladders. But you good brethren, who are so afraid of falling, do not seem to show it practically in your conduct, for you go up and down the ladders as nimbly as possible.”

I have sometimes met with persons who think that if we believe that we shall never fall so as to perish, we are apt to become presumptuous—but we do not, dear brethren. There are other truths that come in to balance this one, so that what they think might come of it is by God’s good grace prevented. And I am not quite sure that those who think that they may finally fall and perish are sufficiently impressed with that belief so as to always be careful.

The fact is, that your carefulness of walk does not depend merely upon your view of this doctrine or that, but it depends upon your state of heart and a great many other things besides—so that you have no reason to judge what you might do if you believed such and such a truth, because if you did believe it, perhaps you would at the same time be a better man—and the possibility that appears to linger around the doctrine would vanish so far as you are concerned.

Let this be the language of all of us who love the Lord, as we look up confidently and reverently to Him,—

*“We have no fear that Thou should lose
One whom eternal love could choose;
But we would ne’er this grace abuse,
Let us not fall. Let us not fall.”*

I know that if we are truly the Lord’s, He will not suffer us to forsake Him. But I must have a wholesome fear lest I should forsake Him, for who am I that I should be sure that I have not deceived myself? I may have done so, and after all, may forsake Him after the loudest professions, and even after the greatest apparent sincerity in avowing that I never will turn away from Him.

So, I ask again—In what sense can we forsake our Lord? Well, there are many senses, but perhaps you will see better what I mean if I describe *a general process of forsaking a friend*. I hope that you have never had to undergo it. I do not know that I ever have, but still, I can imagine that it is something like this.

The old gentleman was your father’s friend, he also had been your own friend, and has done you many a good turn. But at last, he has said something which has provoked you to anger, or he has done

something which you have misunderstood or misinterpreted—and now you feel very cool towards him when you meet. You pass the time of day and perhaps say very much the same things which you used to say, but they are said in a very different fashion. Now, that is how we begin to forsake our God. We may keep up the appearance of friendship with Christ, but it is a very cool affair. We go to a place of worship, but there is no enjoyment, no enthusiasm, no earnestness.

Then the next thing is that you do not call to see your friend as frequently as you used to do. It has not come to an open rupture between you, so you do look in at certain set times when you are expected, but there are none of those little flying visits and that popping in upon him unawares, just to get a look at his face as you used to do.

And on his part, he does not come to see you much. And that is how our forsaking of Christ generally continues. We do not go to talk with Him as we once did, and when we do go to His House, we find that He is not at home. “Can two walk together, except they be agreed?” Then, by and by, perhaps there is a sharp word spoken, and your friend feels that you do not want him.

You have said something that cuts him to the quick and grieves him. It was not anything so very bad if it had been spoken to a stranger—but to be said to him who was your father’s friend, to him whom you always expected to come in, and whom you loved to see—to say it to him was very hard and he naturally took umbrage at it.

That is how it comes to pass between Christ and professors. There is something done which might not be of so much account in the case of non-professors or the openly ungodly, but it is very bad in one who professed to have Christ for his Friend. And do you know what happens, by and by, when your friend is being discarded?

At last he does not call at all—and you do not go to see him. Perhaps the breach is still further widened and little presents are sent back or treated with contempt. There is that oil painting which your father would have, though he could scarcely afford it, because he loved his friend so much, and which he hung up in so conspicuous a place in his house.

Well, the other day, the string broke and you did not buy a fresh piece of cord to hang it up again. In fact, you put the picture away in the lumber room and you do not really care what becomes of it. The little tokens of past affection are all put away, for there is an open rupture now, and when somebody spoke to you about him, lately, you said, “Oh, pray don’t mention him to me! He is no friend of mine now. I used to be on intimate terms with him once, but I have altered my opinion about him altogether.”

So do some professors act towards the Lord Jesus Christ. Those little tokens of love which they thought they had from Him, they send back. They do not remain in fellowship with His church. They do all that they possibly can to disown Him. In the meanwhile, the blessed Lord of love is obliged to disown them, too. And His church disowns them. And by and by, the rupture has become complete. May that never be the portion of any of you!

“No,” says one, “it never will be.” My dear friend, if you are so confident as that, you are the person about whom I am most afraid. I recollect one who used to pray among us, but we had to put him out of the church for evil living. And there was one of our members who said, that night, “If that man is not a child of God, I am not one, myself.” I said, “My dear brother, do not talk like that. I would not pit my soul against the soul of any man, for I do know a little of myself, but I do not know other men as well as I know myself.”

I am very much afraid that neither of the two men I have mentioned was a child of God. By their speech they seemed to be Christians, but their acts were not like those of God’s people. It does not do for us to talk as that man did, but to pray to the Lord, “Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe.” That is the proper prayer for us—or else it may happen even to us as happened to them—and we may forsake our own Friend and our father’s Friend.

Now, *what reasons can we possibly have for forsaking Christ?* We ought to do nothing for which we cannot give good reasons. I have known persons very properly forsake their former friends because they have themselves become new creatures in Christ Jesus, and they have, rightly and wisely, given up the

acquaintances with whom they used to sin. They cannot go now to the house where everything is contrary to their feelings.

But it is not so with Christ. Some so-called friends drag a man down, lower him, injure him, impose upon him, and at last, he is obliged to let them go. But we cannot say that of Christ. His friendship has drawn us up, helped us, sanctified us, elevated us—we owe everything to that friendship. We cannot have a reason, therefore for forsaking this Friend.

I have known some to outgrow an acquaintance or friend. They really have not been able to continue to have common views and sympathies, for while their friend has remained in the mire, they have risen into quite different men by reason of education and other influences. But we can never outgrow Christ. That is not possible.

And the more we grow in a right sense, the more we shall become like Him. A man who has been the friend of our father and of ourselves is the very man to have still as a friend, because he probably understands all about the family difficulties, the family troubles, and he also understands us. Why, he nursed us when we were children and therefore he knows most about us.

I remember that, when lying sorely sick, I had a letter from a kind old gentleman who said that he had that day celebrated his eightieth birthday, and the choicest friend he had at his dinner table was the old family doctor. He said, “He has attended to me so long that he thoroughly knows my constitution, he is nearly as old as myself. But the first time I was ill I had him and he has attended me now for forty years. Once,” he said, “when I had a severe attack of gout, I was tempted to try some very famous man, who very nearly killed me, and until I got back to my old friend, I never was really well again.”

So he wrote to advise me to get some really good physician and let him know my constitution and to stick to him, and never go off to any of the patent medicines or the quacks of the day. Oh, but there is a great deal of truth in that in a spiritual sense. With the utmost reverence, we may say that the Lord Jesus Christ has been our family Physician.

Did He not attend my father in all his sicknesses and my grandfather, too? And He knows the ins and outs of my constitution—He knows my ways, good and bad, and all my sorrows, and therefore I do not go to anyone else for relief. And I advise you also to keep to Jesus Christ, do not forsake Him. If you are ever tempted to go aside, even for a little while, I pray that you may have grace enough to come back quickly and to commit yourself again to Him, and never go astray again.

There is the blessing of having One who is wise, One who is tried, One whose sympathy has been tested, One who has become, as it were, one of thy family, One who has taken your whole household to His heart, and made it part and parcel of Himself. Such a Friend to your own soul, and to your father’s soul, forsake not.

Do not forsake Him, dear friends, because, I almost tremble to say it—you *will want Him some day*. Even if you would never need Him in the future, you ought not to forsake Him. I do not quite like that verse of the hymn at the end of our hymn book,—

*“Ashamed of Jesus! yes, I may,
When I’ve no guilt to wash away;
No tear to wipe, no good to crave,
No fears to quell, no soul to save.”*

No, I *may not*. When all my guilt is gone, I shall not be ashamed of Jesus. When I am in heaven and need no more the pardon of sin, I certainly shall not be ashamed of Him who brought me there. No, but I shall glory in Him more than ever. Your friendship to Christ, and mine, ought not to depend upon what we are going to get out of Him. We must love Him now for what He is, for all that He has already done, and for His own blessed person, and personal beauties, which every day should hold fast our love and bind us in chains of affection to Him.

But suppose you do think of forsaking Christ, where are you going to get another friend to take His place? You must have a friend of some sort—who is going to sit in Christ’s chair? Whose portrait is to be hung up in the old familiar place when the old Friend is discarded? To whom are you going to tell your griefs and from whom will you expect to receive help in time of need? Who will be with you in sickness? Who will be with you in the hour of death? Ah! there is no other who can ever fill the vacuum which the absence of Christ would make. Therefore, never forsake Him.

III. Now I must close with THE CONSEQUENT RESOLVE about which I can say very little, as my time has gone.

Let this be your resolve, by His grace, *instead of forsaking Him, you will cling to Him more closely than ever.* You will own Him when it brings you dishonor to do so. You will trust Him when He wounds you, for “faithful are the wounds of a friend.” You will serve Him when it is costly to do it, when it involves self-denial, resolved that, by the help of His ever-blessed Spirit, without whom you can do nothing, you will never, in any sort of company, conceal the fact that you are a Christian.

Never, under any possible circumstances, wish to be otherwise than a servant of such a Master, a friend of such a Lord. Come now, dear young friends who are getting cool towards Christ, and elder friends to whom religion is becoming monotonous—come to your Lord once more and ask Him to bind you with cords, even with cords to the horns of the altar. You have had time to count the cost of all Egyptia’s treasure—forego it and forswear it once for all. But the riches of Christ you can never count—so come and take Him again to be your All-in-all.

Those about to be baptized will feel, I trust—as we shall when we look on—and say, each man and woman for himself, or herself—

*“Tis done. The great transaction’s done:
I am my Lord’s, and He is mine.”*

Nail your colors to the mast. Bear in your body the marks of the Lord Jesus. Ay, let everyone of us who has been baptized into Christ feel that our whole body bears the watermark, for we have been “buried with him by baptism into death.” It was not for the putting off of the filthiness of the flesh, but as a declaration that we were dead to the world and quickened into newness of life in Christ Jesus our Savior.

So let it be with you, too, dear friends, as you follow your Lord through the water. Cling to Him, cleave to Him. “Thine own friend, and thy father’s friend, forsake not.”

May God add His blessing, for our Lord Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

JOHN 15:9-27

Verse 9. *As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you:*

Oh, drink this nectar down! It is as when Cleopatra dissolved the pearl into a single draught, for here is the choicest pearl of truth that was ever dissolved into a single verse to be a delicious draught for His people to drink. “As the Father hath loved me”—as surely as the Father has loved Me and then, “as”—that is—in the same manner “as the Father hath loved me”—without beginning, without ending, without measure, without change, “so have I loved you.”

9-10. *Continue ye in my love. If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love;*

Note this point of the Lord’s discipline—not that Christ ever casts away His people, but that He does take from them the sweet sense of His love, the realization of it, if they are disobedient to Him, and keep not His commandments.

10-11. *Even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love. These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you,*

That He might joy in us—feel a sacred delight in thinking of us as He does when He sees us keeping His commandments and treasuring up His words, and so living in His love and being mighty in prayer.

11. *And that your joy might be full.*

If Christ is not pleased with us, we cannot be glad. And if He has no joy in us, we cannot have joy in Him. These two things rise and fall together. When the father of the family looks with joy upon his boy, then the boy is happy. But when the father has no joy in his son, then be sure of this, the son has no joy in his father, but he is sad at heart.

O God, may we never grieve You, for if we do, we shall be ourselves grieved. At least, I trust that we shall—we would not have it otherwise. But oh! that we might have the testimony that Enoch had before his translation, that we have pleased God! Then shall we have true pleasure in ourselves.

12-14. *This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.*

Obedience, then, is rewarded with a holy friendship, for Christ becomes in the highest sense our Friend. But we are not His friends till we cease to delight in sin and turn away from it into the paths of holiness.

15. *Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.*

The servant works in a building and it is enough for him that he is laying part of a line of brick or stone. Perhaps he has never seen the design of the structure, nor had a wish to do so. But you and I have the great Architect constantly coming to us to tell us what the building is to be and to explain to us His plans—and so we work with greater pleasure and joy than a mere laborer might. The very heart of Christ is laid bare to His people. “The secret of the LORD is with them that fear him.” Happy are His people—glad to be His servants—gladder still to be His friends.

16. *Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.*

There you see divine election leading on to fruit-bearing and perpetuated in perseverance—“that your fruit should remain.” It brings to every one of its objects this conspicuous favor, prevailing power in prayer—“that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.”

17. *These things I command you, that ye love one another.*

O you professors, who have no love to one another, you are breaking the King's commandment! You are living in direct violation of a plain command that is most dear to His heart. Oh, that we might constantly hear it and obey it! “These things I command you, that ye love one another.”

18. *If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you.*

That is what you have reason to expect, and you may feel honored if they treat you as they have treated your Lord.

19-22. *If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also. But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me. If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloke for their sin.*

There is an awful increase of sin produced by Christ appearing to a man. And if any of you have been very near to the kingdom, and your conscience has been aroused, and your mind has been impressed by the truth, and yet you have gone back to your sin, you have multiplied that sin a thousand-

fold. The times of your ignorance God may have winked at, but now you are sinning against light and knowledge—and unless you repent, terrible will be your doom.

23-26. *He that hateth me hateth my Father also. If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin: but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father. But this cometh to pass, that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law, They hated me without a cause. But when the Comforter is come,*

And He has come. He is here. He has never been taken away. He still abides with and in the church.

26. *Whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me:*

By this mark you may know whether that which has been taught you is of the Spirit of God. If it does not testify of Christ—if He is not the head and front of it all—there is nothing in it for you to accept. If any man comes to you with what he calls a revelation, if it is not all concerning Christ, by this shall you judge it—it is not of the Spirit of God if it does not testify of Christ.

27. *And ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning.*

May we all bear witness according as we have been with Christ, for there is no bearing witness to Christ unless we have first been with Him.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—376, 668, 667

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